

OBITUARY

DR. JACOB L. WORTMAN

On June 26, 1926, Dr. Jacob L. Wortman died in the sixty-ninth year of his age at Brownsville, Texas.

Dr. Wortman was born August 25, 1856, on a farm near Oregon City, Oregon. His parents were of Dutch extraction, and were among the pioneers in the settlement and development of what is now the State of Oregon, having crossed the plains in a covered wagon from Iowa in the year 1852. In 1873 he entered Willamette University at Salem, Oregon, where he remained for two years. He then entered the Oregon State University at Eugene, where he studied for a year. It was at the latter institution that he met Professor Thomas Condon, through whose influence he became deeply interested in geology and kindred subjects. In 1877 he left the University in order to join the expedition which had been sent under C. H. Sternberg by Professor E. D. Cope to explore the John Day beds in eastern Oregon and subsequently made explorations in the lower Eocene of Wyoming. He faithfully assisted Sternberg for two years and when Sternberg returned to Washington Wortman accompanied him. He found employment in a curatorial capacity in the Army and Navy Medical Museum in Washington, and at the same time pursued a course in medicine at the Georgetown Medical College where he was duly graduated. He then was engaged by Professor Cope to assist him in the work which he was carrying on in his laboratory in the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia. His task was that of a preparator, employed in the work of extracting from the matrix and cleaning for study the fossils which he in company with Sternberg had collected upon the expedition to which reference has been made, as well as other specimens. No opportunity was afforded him to describe or write upon the material which he had collected and prepared. Nevertheless so high were his attainments in comparative anatomy that Professor Joseph Leidy often requested him to take charge of his classes in comparative anatomy when Leidy for various reasons was unable to meet them. After serving for a time with Cope Dr. Wortman returned to the Medical Museum in Washington, where he acted as Assistant Curator for a time. Then in 1890 he was

induced to accept a position at the American Museum of Natural History in New York. In 1891 he went into the Wasatch beds in Wyoming, where he had already made explorations, and began that long series of expeditions which were sent out by the American Museum for nine successive years. The discoveries made by him and his junior associates form the basis of a number of papers written by him, partly in conjunction with Dr. Henry Fairfield Osborn and partly independently. He attained a well recognized position as a vertebrate paleontologist through his researches in the field and his various writings.

The younger men, who were associated with him at that time, derived great benefit from the instruction which he voluntarily gave them in the science of comparative anatomy. In a recent conversation with Mr. Peterson he has spoken with great appreciation of the lessons which he received by the camp-fire, when Dr. Wortman in the evenings gathered "the boys" about him, and, using the skull of a coyote, a bison, or a horse, which had been picked up upon the prairie, imparted to them a thorough knowledge of mammalian craniology. When these parties returned to the Museum in the winter months, Dr. Wortman, as a labor of love, formed a class, composed of the young men associated with him, and regularly gave them instruction in mammalian anatomy.

In the spring of the year 1899 he resigned his position at the American Museum of Natural History to accept the Curatorship of Vertebrate Paleontology in the Carnegie Museum and was sent to eastern Wyoming to collect the fossils of the Jurassic beds in the region of the Freeze-out Mountains, where the writer of these lines had already preceded him. The exploring party consisted of Dr. Wortman, Mr. Arthur S. Coggeshall, and the late Mr. W. H. Reed of Laramie, Wyoming. After failure to secure satisfactory results at the locality, to which the party had first been guided, they were so fortunate as to discover not far from Sheep Creek in Laramie County the fossil remains of an almost complete skeleton of a *Diplodocus* subsequently described and named *Diplodocus carnegiei* by the late John Bell Hatcher, replicas of which have been installed in many of the national museums of the world. This beast has often been referred to as "the animal which made paleontology popular." On the return of Dr. Wortman to the Carnegie Museum in the late fall of 1899 he devoted himself with his assistants to the removal of the specimen from the

matrix, and its preparation for study. In the spring of the year 1900 he impulsively resigned his curatorship because of a minor difficulty with a member of his force, whose dismissal he demanded, but whom the Director refused to discharge. He spent a short time in New Haven in special work, and then for climatic reasons took up his residence at Brownsville, Texas, where he continued thereafter to reside.

In 1912 he married Miss Eugenie Brulay. Mrs. Wortman and two daughters, Marie and Jeannine, survive him.

Dr. Wortman was indefatigable in the field. In the laboratory he was most painstaking. His name is firmly imbedded in the literature of mammalian paleontology. He was pre-eminent as a teacher. It is to be regretted that his impulsive temperament led him to abandon his paleontological studies in the year 1900. He literally "shook the dust" of paleontology from his feet at that time and absolutely refused even to read anything relating to the science in which he had already achieved for himself an enduring reputation. It was a curious act of renunciation, the psychology of which is hard to explain.